

Bhattacharya, Tagore's nonfiction provides ample evidence of his view of history where she confirms "Tagore never wrote history in narrative form: his interventions in historiography were chiefly in the form of critique" (Chaudhuri 269).

Tagore's *View of Politics and the Contemporary World* by Sobhanlal Datta Gupta has some political lessons guided by his "spiritual aura" (Chaudhuri 285) to the present-day reality. Kathleen M. O'Connell's essay *Tagore's 'Santiniketan Learning Associated with Life'* painstakingly traces the origin, history, vision and mission of this alternative system of a poet's theory of education and its impact on the contemporary world. 'Tagore and Village Economy- A Vision of Wholeness' by Sourin Bhattacharya throws light upon Tagore's holistic philosophy of sustainable living and peaceful coexistence shaped by the life-affirming principles of *Shri Samaj* and *Atmashakthi*. Tagore's rendezvous with the western science and his association with Einstein is introduced by Partha Ghose in his essay, 'Rabindranath and Science'. Rabindranath Tagore's aesthetics and his role as a literary critic are discussed by Jayanti Chattopadhyay and Swapan Chakravorty. 'Rabindranath, Bhakti, and the Bhakti Poets' by France Bhattacharya outlines Tagore's understanding and integration of his religion, spirituality and mystical thought. These essays quintessentially showcase the multidimensional trajectory of literary sensibilities and critical responses of the scholars from the East and the West.

A literature student or scholar who is seldom introduced to Tagore may experience the same anguish of the persona in Song 50 of *Gitanjali*, "But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all". This extremely readable book aspires to be a Bible in Tagore Studies and inspires young researchers and academicians to revisit and reread the literary classics and the life-affirming philosophies of the great visionary and master storyteller to suggest ways out of the challenges and crises of the 21st century and recreate a world "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high" (*Gitanjali* Song 35).

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IMPERFECT SOLIDARITIES: TAGORE, GANDHI, DU BOIS AND THE GLOBAL ANGLOPHONE. By Madhumita Lahiri. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2020. 232 pp.

Translating is an academic exercise that involves riddling ramifications whether in language or in poetry. I use the term 'poetry' to juxtapose, and perhaps, draw forth a contrast against 'language' in its unquenched quest to reach at meaning and more intriguingly, to highlight its peculiar urge to reside through but out of language. Poetry, in words and sentiments, is thus about translating hidden/eclipsed/sheltered inscapes that are seldom transmissible; if at all rendered cognizable even from within the narrator or the 'self'. However, this longing to translate is central to the conception of a community and its self identification; in its loose definitions, its mapping of lapses/excesses on the co-ordinates of collective imagination and its association through the political interstices of differential commonalities. In Madhumita Lahiri's text *Imperfect Solidarities: Tagore, Gandhi, Du Bois and the Global Anglophone*, this idea of identification takes on the guiding motif to her argument that establishes her concerns exactly from where Benedict Anderson pauses for his theoretical respite. To Lahiri, this problem of identification and translation sprawls towards the 'undefined' and the delicate, the literary and the 'international'.

Hence, here the author explores a politics of excesses. The idea of how a community (both cultural and intellectual) can be formed through the presence of a vibrant print culture is presented

by Lahiri (like Anderson) but on seemingly different lines in comparison to Anderson's hypothesis. She not only argues on print media function to transcend community imagination (and participation) in terms of 'homogeneity' and 'originality' alone but also onto a more positive plane that can possibly interrogate boundaries (that it created for Anderson) and forge hybrid alliances (in terms of race, ethnicity and religion). This is essentially the vectorial argument that Lahiri attempts to persuade through her three, intense but cascading chapters.

While discussing on the role of the 'author function' in the introductory section of the text, she admits to have taken a cue from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's 'reparative' mode of reading to skim through the 'surfaces' of possibilities in the construction of what she calls an 'interpretative community'. Of course, her methodology to substantiate her argument is central to her unexpressed but surely cautious understanding about the hermeneutics of the international. This moves against the often problematic and monolithic imagination of 'global' implications. Her notion of the 'international' is politically fragmented and diverse but aesthetically collaborative and interpretative. Through this idea of 'translating' a shared aesthetic and at times spiritual/political inheritance, she infuses her argument with an unmistakably dynamic texture that runs through her chapters while connecting these varied aspects (of the individual, spiritual and the political) with the notion of solidarities. These dynamic, amorphous and perhaps fragmented associations is perhaps what impels Lahiri to call these conceptions to be 'imperfect', quite like the incompleteness of the 'messianic' that she momentarily tickles within the explanatory sections of her foreword and covertly but repeatedly keeps on rehearsing in her core chapters.

In the prefatory statements of the text, Lahiri discusses the differences in the genre attributions of the print national/international dichotomies. To her, while 'print nationalism' is built on the forms of the novel and the newspaper, these are only 'means' to an 'end' for community imagination (or the "imaginative community" as Anderson terms it). However, 'print internationalism' relies on the tonalities of what she calls "fictionalised history" and "the print periodical" towards a collaborative community practising conscious/semi-conscious exercises on interpretation. As Lahiri puts it, "where novels can encourage nationalism by providing characters who might seem just like us, the fictionalized histories of print internationalism encourage us to read historical personages differently...we learn to see them as protagonists of ongoing struggles, whose goals, though possibly different, are none the less, relevant to our own." This essential differentiation between 'interchangeability' and 'regularity' (in ideological and interpellative terms) on one hand and "possibilities" and "erratic temporality" on the other hand leads to the realization of a different community that is even less pronounced in terms of abstractedness. This community, to the author, is one which "share ways of reading texts" and harbour actively "shared goals". Again, this community is presented to be a culmination of a rhetorical 'discourse community' and Brian Stock's "textual community" that remains indifferent to the vagaries of literacy but hinges on "political experiences" of dubious commonalities. These already existing definitions of literary/cultural importance proves instrumental in helping Lahiri find her meaning in the interpretive societies that she wishes to discover.

I have used these relevant words and quotations to assure proper credit to the authorial intentions which, right from the beginning of the text, remains deeply engaged with what seems to be a politics of excesses. To her, this inherent unpredictability about the future of a community, its negatively present but elusive defining lines and its disinterested, detached but sporadic glimpses of retrospection towards a sensible past is what is always symptomatic in its excessive anticipation. After all, all 'acts' of interpretation and literary exploration are anticipated to be 'synchronised' albeit within its obvious and already given differences (of race, geography and even distinctive experiences). However, the author repeatedly segregates these differences through which she broadly calls as the 'experience of the political'. In her text, racism is at the centre-stage of the political. And if we concur her foundational basis of the politically driven and experientially/aesthetically charged community, her anticipation is more pronounced in her depiction of the possibilities in shared

semantics of reading. This anticipation of the uncertain but the possible is perhaps which Lahiri later describes to distinguish between a 'neology' and philology and discuss faith in relation to 'suspicion' while remembering Ricoeur. Similarly, she also refers to the same anticipation when she discovers the historical ellipses and absences of the work of women apropos the texts that are discussed in Lahiri's own and propounds 'non-resolution' of possible contradictions in ways of reading when she dismisses Jameson and his 'closure' through his 'symptomatic mode' of reading.

All the three chapters in the text use the notion of 'international solidarities' from a decolonising perspective and with an intention of political resilience and companionship. In the first chapter entitled, "The Global Anglophone", the author re-discovers Japanese art history and its association with Indic spiritual knowledge systems through the conversations and literary exchanges of the art historian Okakura Kakuzo and Vivekananda, the important role played by Sister Nivedita in the process and Tagore's inheritance from their book *The Ideals of the East*. The commonality that Kakuzo finds with Indic spirituality directs Tagore's concerns his lectures in China (*Talks in China*) that Lahiri focuses on. In fact, Tagore's 'discovery' of the 'Asiatic' attitude is through divinity that is unbounded by territorial demarcations but none the less, claimed to a great effect by the spirituality of the Asian civilization, thus serving as an effective anti-colonial identity in a clash of the colonizer/colonized civilizations and attitudes. In this, the unusual and deliberate translations that Tagore penned differently (in style and tone if not intent) for his Bengali poems in English, the extraordinary success of "The Crescent Moon" as a poetic compilation in China and Tagore's generous review of the English translation of the newly translated text of Qu Yuan's *Li Sao* by Lim Boon Keng pleads a greater cause of a differently defined and uncertain literary community that the author draws our attention to. More importantly, the anxiety between inheritance and the possible is given significant focus by the 'untranslatability' of Sanskrit coinages that are meant to be culturally unrecoverable by the West and yet, not completely reductive enough to be called mere 'essentialism' (the term 'gitanjali' for example).

In the second chapter, "People of Colour", Lahiri traces back to the equation between colonisation and racial colour as she reads Gandhi's evolution as a political figure from the continent of South Africa to India and his changing notions of hierarchy and his proclaimed notions of equality. Gandhi's autobiographical writings, *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *My Experiments with Truth*, the journals and newspapers sponsored and edited by him like *The Indian Opinion*, *Hind Swaraj* and *Young India* are interestingly analysed by Lahiri to present how 'print internationalism' cut across continents of the coloniser and the colonised, the 'ancient' and the 'modern', the 'savages' and the 'gentile'. Gandhi's progression of racial understanding however does not find equal nuance in terms of an international approach and unlike Tagore, Gandhi narrows down his racial concerns only in terms of analogy and 'parable' while keeping the Indian race at the centre of his politics. Thus Lahiri reads 'satyagraha' as a neologism with its freshly anti-colonial but narrowly parochial comradeship, in relation to other colonised races, as a failure of translatability but nevertheless thinks of it as a possible site of international politics. Here, Lahiri notes how his South African secretary and admirer Sonja Schlesin while scripting Gandhi's notion of colour 'anticipated' other oppressed coloured races to follow his suit in an act of collective anticipation.

The final chapter entitled "The Global South", throws down equal possibilities of the interpretative act as Lahiri reads through Du Bois's reading of Gandhi and Gandhi's admiration for Du Bois in his act of keeping a copy of *The Crisis* in his *ashram*. Du Bois's politics is perhaps portrayed as the most mature and nuanced of them all in his invocation to different races of colour as he widens his notion of solidarity in literature to not only Afro-Americans and Africans but as he called in the later prints of his newspapers, to "people and children of colour". The two paper that Du Bois edited and published *The Crisis* and *The Brownie's Book* are overtly and covertly political with the latter having a very significant artistic and imaginative concern as well. Here, she brings in the remarkable but partially eclipsed contributions of Jessie Redmon Fauset to the popularity and artistry of the journal. Most importantly, journal redefined the notion of the

'brownie' in Fauset's hands. For instance, the neologism of the 'brownie' that had a history of cultural associations (from a benevolent spirit in folklore to a symbol of US imperialism and finally to British scout heroism) is rediscovered and recreated into a newer range of meanings. Lahiri carefully denoted how this effort at 'transcreation' becomes central to generate an interpretative community of readers that meditate on identity and politics from a perspective of heightened agency and against what Barthes would call 'lisibility'. Lahiri is brilliant in her analysis of Du Bois' *The Dark Princess* that narrates the union of an upper caste Hindu woman to a black man from the United States and the 'scriptable' future of their coloured child. In this, Du Bois not only talks about racial concerns in the West but tries to understand the politics of the East in terms of caste and colour (he uses 'caste-colour' as a new term altogether), thus opening up channels of solidarity that would mean a more international approach to oppression as a social phenomenon. This notion of solidarity is heightened in Du Bois' association with Lala Lajpat Rai and his exchanges with Du Bois. Lahiri, thus, presents a rigorous and in depth study of several uncommon politics of and in print.

Lahiri's concern with the past is but only to propose a comradeship for the present and the future. She is commendable with her research and her detailed depiction of minute instances in favour of her proposition. As I had attempted to read her engagement to read in terms of anticipation and excesses, Lahiri perhaps gives a strong voice to her mind in her deliberate but beautiful textual strategy in connecting topographies through a shared individual (Nivedita, Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, Schlesin, Du Bois, Fauset, and Lajpat Rai) and a growing readership that might be deeply connected (as in the case of Du Bois and the Indian situation), middlingly warm (as for Tagore) or completely unintended (like Gandhi's case). Probably, the author shares her anticipation of a world where reading (textually and in quotidian terms) raises a spirit of solidarity with or without a politics of intention; where politics itself redeems itself in readership and companionship, where intention is relegated to the old order and politics of reading is in itself a liberating exercise; Lahiri anticipates scholarship that reads the world where literary intention is more scriptable and open to possibilities, to solidarities imperfect but none the less solidarities of the common and thus a function of the messianic.

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ISLAM AND ASIA: A HISTORY. By Chiara Formichi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 348 pp.

What is the relationship between Asia and Islam? How far back do their roots and acquaintanceship go? In *Islam and Asia: A History* (2020), Chiara Formichi answers these questions by not only decolonizing knowledge on the spread and role of Islam in and across Asia but also highlighting the role women played in this expansion: thus bringing to the reader's attention an often disregarded key element to the building of nations and the spread of a global religion. Formichi slowly unravels widely held dominant views of the influence of Islam on a global scale by offering a transregional approach as to why and how Asia and Islam are counterparts in their respective histories and developments. Formichi challenges the often considered dominance of the Middle East in Islamic development. The author brings to light a key component in the development of the global religion, Asia, and argues that the interactions between society and religion have resulted in a change in global Islamic practices. The thematically divided chapters are approached with strokes that move from the macro to the micro: covering territory and chronology, and social, religious, economic and political transformations. Beginning from the